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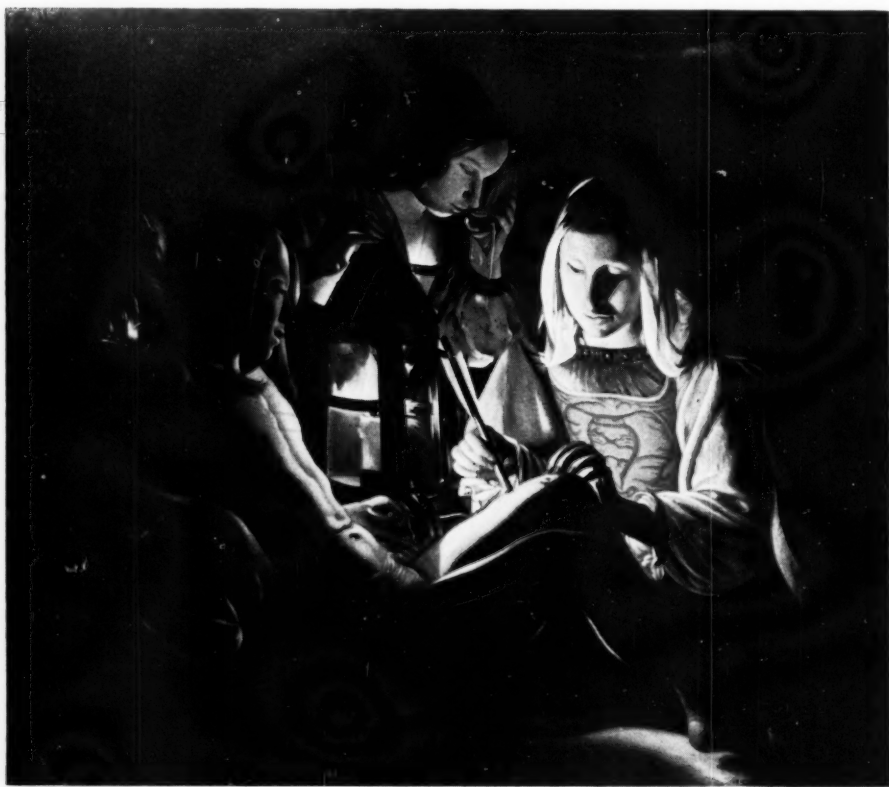
ST. SEBASTIAN
NURSED BY
ST. IRENE
(DETAIL)

By GEORGES
DE LA TOUR,
FRENCH, 1593-1652

Gift of the
Ralph Harman Booth
Fund, 1948

GEORGES DE LA TOUR'S ST. SEBASTIAN NURSED BY ST. IRENE

Nothing has been more interesting or fascinating to watch in the artistic world of our time than the gradual rediscovery of one of the most wonderful of French artists, Georges de la Tour. Born a generation before Vermeer, he passed like the great Delft painter from fame in his own day into a long forgetfulness, from which he did not emerge until nearly three generations after Vermeer's rediscovery. Today he is considered one of the most original painters of France and the best French opinion now describes the painting of the seventeenth century, one of the supreme centuries of French genius, as revolving around three names: Poussin, who corresponds to Corneille and Racine as the expression of the classical spirit; the brothers Le Nain, the expression of the spirit of



ST. SEBASTIAN NURSED BY ST. IRENE
By GEORGES DE LA TOUR
FRENCH, 1593-1652
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reality; and Georges de la Tour, with whom is linked, almost involuntarily, the lofty spirit of intellectual power and spiritual mysticism of Pascal.¹

*St. Sebastian Nursed by St. Irene*², just given to the Detroit Institute of Arts through the Ralph H. Booth Fund, is therefore an acquisition of exceptional interest. It was for many years in the famous collection of Joseph Brummer, one of the most remarkable connoisseurs of our time. Brummer seldom bought paintings, but occasionally if he liked a picture he bought it. In this *St. Sebastian Nursed by St. Irene* he took great pride, as a painting of extraordinary quality. But hidden among his enormous collection of ancient and medieval works of art, it escaped the attention of most students and has not hitherto been published.

It belongs with a group of pictures by La Tour—the *Adoration of the Shepherds*; the *Magdalen with the Night Light* of the Terff collection; the *St. Joseph as Carpenter* formerly in the Percy Moore Turner collection (Louvre); perhaps the *Education of the Virgin* acquired last year by the Frick Collection, New York—which seem to represent the experimental years in which the painter developed his personal idiom. In these pictures there is still a touch of earthy realism which reminds one a little of the Le Nains' peasant scenes. As might be expected of youthful work, these pictures are at a slightly lower level of intensity than the masterpieces of his maturity. La Tour has not yet hit upon the unique concentration of all the spiritual force of the picture toward one point in the scene, which gives such power to the *New Born* or the *Magdalen with the Mirror*. The reflections of the candle upon the body of the wounded St. Sebastian, on the helmet and the cloak spread beneath him on the ground, upon the lantern itself and on the figures of St. Irene and her attendant, are rich and brilliant. The drama is picturesque and varied, not yet worked into a single, hushed moment of stillness. Yet La Tour has already begun to compose in terms of his own magic. The drawing of the figures, the folds of the drapery, the lighting, the color scheme, the general character of the composition are typical of him. In place of the compact, close-up grouping of the Caravaggio school, with its characteristic use of half-length figures, we see La Tour here—perhaps for the first time—set his figures deeper within the picture and surround them with the area of vast, opaque darkness which he used so eloquently to give silence and grandeur. The characteristic tone of his imagination is also here. There is the deeply felt religious subject, tragic in actual character, but expressed in so lofty and haunting a tone of mystery and noble calm as to be at once indescribable and unforgettable. It is no wonder that Mlle. Bertin-Mouroit, describing a special showing of five of La Tour's less known paintings at the Louvre in 1948, was reminded by their mysterious grandeur of the saying of Pascal: "Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie."

French art at its highest has always given to its subjects, even those of suffering and martyrdom, a certain delicate reserve and serenity, and this is well exemplified by our *St. Sebastian*. Sebastian was the son of a distinguished family of Narbonne, in Gaul, who at an early age was promoted to the command of a company of the Praetorian guards and held a special position in the favor of

the Emperor Diocletian. When his Christian faith was at last declared, the Emperor, who loved him, tried at first to save him; but finding him firm in his faith, he condemned him to be shot to death with arrows, and ordered that the troops should be informed that he suffered for being a Christian, not for any other fault. After the archers had left him for dead, Irene, the widow of one of his martyred friends, came to take away his body for burial. But she found that he still breathed. So she carried him to her house and dressed his wounds and cared for him until he was wholly recovered. When, restored to health, he again testified to his faith before the emperor, he finally met death in another fashion. It is thus a moment of suffering irradiated by tenderness and hope which La Tour has chosen to illustrate.

In describing a picture by this rare and difficult master, one must feel a certain humility. La Tour is always enigmatic and puzzling. While studying this work I turned to the various publications of Charles Sterling, whose writings I always find particularly helpful in their acute perception of color and brush stroke, and read through his description of the *Magdalen with the Mirror*³ and the earlier *Magdalen with the Night Light* and the *Two Monks*.⁴ "The touch, so free . . . the delicate modeling, with passages sensitively rendered but somewhat abrupt, as in the right shoulder . . . the impasto, soft and pearly, now spread in thin satiny layers, now coagulated into little drops of precious enamel, such as those which fell from the magic brush of Vermeer . . . the hands executed in his way, with slight black accents for nails . . . the candle, the wax and flame of which contain buttery greys and whites peculiar to this artist . . . the single white accent which La Tour usually uses to create delicate accents on hair and skin . . ." all seem to correspond exactly to our picture, although there is a bold, free and experimental quality in his early work, instead of the smooth assurance of La Tour's later technique. The picture is very well preserved and is marked throughout by a freshness and spontaneity of brushstroke that reveal the hand of a great master.

La Tour's work offers modern scholarship one of its most difficult problems of connoisseurship, because for almost every one of his compositions there exist a whole series of old repetitions, obviously made in the seventeenth century, some extremely close to the original, some certainly the work of clumsy copyists. Did Georges de la Tour sometimes himself repeat his own compositions? Are some of these contemporary replicas made by the master himself? Or are they all the work of other artists? We do not know. Of our composition there exist an old copy at Rouen (which Jamot published as an old copy of a lost original) and two other old copies in private hands. Mlle. Bertin-Mourot, who has examined these with care, describes them as very "rustiques." But the repetitions of other compositions are far from "rustiques." Both the *St. Jeromes*, in Stockholm and in Grenoble, are certainly by La Tour himself. The whole problem is one of extreme difficulty and as yet is unsolved.

In one detail La Tour resembles Vermeer of Delft. The sparkle of the light is caught and intensified in little sharp, shining highlights, which do not

appear in the numerous copies of his work. The flash and shimmer of these highlights are what give the candlelight its power and convincing effect. A tiny light on the dark, suffering eye of St. Sebastian brings a magic glow of life; an accent on the lip creates the moist softness of the form. The shimmering lights on the helmet and the lantern are done with impasto touches of white and red that stand out almost impressionist in boldness, and are reminiscent of the impasto lights of the *Card Sharper*. Everywhere the picture preserves this energy and spontaneity, which create the lights and half-lights of which the composition is built.

The color is a study in the luminous vermilions, mauve reds and flame colors of La Tour's singular palette, relieved only by the contrasts of warm opaque brown, warm black and white. St. Irene's white linen headdress has half-lights of rose and gray; her collar is an ashen gray. Her bodice is in strong tones of cinnabar, against which the softer material of her sleeve seems almost mauve. The abrupt yet delicate modeling of her left sleeve is one of the most beautiful passages of painting in the picture.

But the most remarkable head is that of St. Sebastian. A single sparkle of light gleaming on the darkness of the eye is almost magical in its suggestion of the inner life. Other touches give a wonderful and touching reality to the moist skin and half-open lips. This youthful face, proud, weary, tragic and tender, shows us the peculiar glow of life, a perfect union of physical and psychological reality, which speaks to us so eloquently in La Tour's greatest works.

Why was such an artist as this—so adept, gifted, profound, original—bearing the title "peintre ordinaire du Roi" in 1646 (that is, three years after the death of Louis XIII), forgotten so completely in France, a country which is normally by no means forgetful of its great men? The answer lies in the centralization of French culture upon Paris and upon the king's court, which was carried out with deliberate policy by Louis XIV and his ministers so effectively that Paris and Versailles have ever since been the home of France's artistic life. Georges de la Tour was an artist of Lorraine. He passed his life in Lunéville. His art was a last flowering of the old culture of the provinces, which was extinguished by the overpowering splendor shining from the court of the Sun King at Versailles and Marly. The classical tradition of Poussin, the courtly elegance of portrait painters and the decorators of Versailles, became the officially accepted art of the seventeenth century. All else was forgotten. In intervening centuries La Tour's name was remembered only by the local antiquarian sentiment of Lorraine.

La Tour's rediscovery in the twentieth century is dramatic enough to lend interest to the painter. But such rediscoveries do not occur by chance. They take place when the revolutions of history bring us once again to problems and interests which are akin to the spirit of the earlier age—and the mysterious and dramatic art of La Tour seems to speak to us with compelling eloquence.

E. P. RICHARDSON

¹ Charles Sterling, *Peintres de la Réalité*, Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, 1934; Paul Jamot, *Georges de la Tour*, Paris, Floury, 1948; René Huyghe, "L'influence de La Tour," *L'amour de l'art*, XXVI (1946), 255; Thérèse Bertin-Mouroit, "Cinq nouveaux Georges de la Tour exposés au Louvre," *Arts*, August 8, 1948, p. 1.

² Acc. no. 48.278. Canvas. Height 43¾ inches; width 48¾ inches. Gift of the Ralph H. Booth Fund, 1948.

³ *Burlington Magazine*, LXXI (1937), 8.

⁴ *Burlington Magazine*, LXXII (1938), 203.

A VIEW OF DELFT by JAN VAN DER HEYDEN

Jan van der Heyden is an example of the artist who is also an inventor. Unlike Fulton or Morse (to name familiar American examples) he did not sacrifice his painting but showed that it was possible for a serious artist to be also an ingenious inventor and careful man of business, without damage to his art. Early in life he began working on methods of lighting the streets of cities (the Dutch seventeenth century cities were the pioneers of applying modern technology to civic improvements) and in middle life perfected the hose fire engine for extinguishing fires, which brought him both official position and a



VIEW OF DELFT
By JAN VAN DER HEYDEN, DUTCH, 1637-1712
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1948

comfortable fortune. The book which he wrote, and illustrated with his own etchings, to demonstrate the advantages of his invention, *Beschryving der nieuwljks uitgevonden engeectrojeerde Slang-Brand-Spuiten* (Amsterdam, 1690) is a beautiful example of Dutch seventeenth century book making. At his death in 1712 he left his children a comfortable estate and a good collection of pictures, earned more by his invention than by his art.

Yet he was a sensitive and original artist. Van der Heyden in Amsterdam and Gerrit Berckheyde in Haarlem are the masters of the town views in Dutch seventeenth century painting. Vermeer and de Hooch had painted street scenes in Delft in the 1650's, but the town view took form in Holland in the 1660's with the appearance of these two specialists.

This *View of Delft* by Jan van der Heyden is one of his celebrated works. It was already noted as "an excellent production" a hundred years ago by John Smith in his *Catalogue of Dutch and Flemish Artists* (1834, no. 99) and attracted great interest when it came up in the Six sale in 1928 at Amsterdam. The portion of the Six collection sold at that time did not include the famous family portraits, which were protected by endowments, but consisted of the notable group of pictures acquired by the family in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The van der Heyden was one of this group. It had come originally from the Van Winter collection, Amsterdam; it passed at the Six sale to Lord Melchett, who sold it again about 1934 or 1935 to the Dutch collector, H. L. Larsen. The Larsen collection was dispersed last year, and the painting has now found a home in our museum as the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb.

In his early period Jan van der Heyden worked in a fresh and delicate atmospheric style. At this time he often collaborated also with the excellent Amsterdam painter Adriaen van de Velde, who painted the figures in van der Heyden's city scapes. A good example of their collaboration, painted in the 1660's, is *A Bull in a City Street* in our collection, also the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Whitcomb some years ago. After the 1660's the artist devoted a great part of his time to his inventions. His later works are rarer, but no less remarkable in their own way. *A View of Delft* (which is shown by the costumes to date from the last quarter of the century) is a notable example of the jewel-like style he developed in his later years.

The scene represented is a famous one in Dutch history. It is a view looking along the canal known as the *Oude Delft* in the city of Delft. In the distance is the noble brick tower of the Oude Kerk, a late thirteenth century Gothic building dedicated to St. Hippolytus. Just across the canal from the church is the Prinsenhof, originally a convent, which became the residence of the Prince of Orange in 1575. Here William the Silent was assassinated by Balthasar Gerard on July 10, 1654. Travelers to Delft visit this house of William of Orange and cross this bridge to wander through the vast, rambling aisles of the old church to see the tombs of the two famous admirals, Piet Hein who captured the Spanish "Plate Fleet" and the great Tromp who is said to have hoisted a

broom at his masthead to show that he had swept the Narrow Seas clear of the English.

Van der Heyden's ability to combine jewel-like detail and color in these late pictures with air and space and light is remarkable. Yet still more remarkable is his ability to create the *feeling of a city*. He loved these Dutch towns. He spent his whole life in adorning, protecting, improving them and celebrating them in his art. He creates, better than any other painter in Holland, the peculiar composite impression which is the life and character of a city—a mingling of the life of people and of stones, welded into the complex organism which we call a City. In this picture there are old, splendid buildings and slow waters, a man and woman walking by in fashionable clothes, two dogs absorbed in their dog world, a woman washing clothes, another feeding her chickens, shop signs, windows, doors opening, people coming out and going in, the grey Dutch sky overhead. Out of these details van der Heyden has created something that gives one very convincingly the imaginative sensation of a Dutch city. This street and canal felt exactly like that when I walked down it in 1937, on just such a grey still noon, looking for the house where Pieter de Hooch lived beyond the next bridge or so south.

E. P. RICHARDSON

Acc. no. 48.218. Panel. Height, 22½ inches; width, 28½ inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1948. Collections: Van Winter, Amsterdam; Six, Amsterdam, 1928, no. 13; Lord Melchett, London; H. L. Larsen. References: John Smith, "*A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters*," 1834, vol. V, no. 99; C. Hofstede de Groot, "*A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, 1927, vol. VIII, no. 52; Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum, "*Paintings and Family Portraits of the Six Family Collections*," 1900, no. 43; *Pantheon*, vol. II (1928), p. 427 and illustrated p. 431; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, "*A Thousand Years of Landscape East and West*," 1945, no. 69.

FOUR DRAWINGS by COPLEY

John Singleton Copley, perhaps America's greatest portrait painter in the eighteenth century, is also remembered for a series of six large and dramatic narrative paintings, executed during his English period, between 1778 and 1808. The earliest of these is *Watson and the Shark*, a vividly realistic, factual though nightmarish subject existing in four known versions: a small oil sketch in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, dating from the year 1778; a life-size version of the same year now in Christ's Hospital, London; a replica of the latter in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and finally, unlike the first three which are horizontal in format, a previously unrecorded vertical composition¹ acquired two years ago by the Detroit Institute of Arts, signed and dated 1782 (Fig. 1). Mr. E. P. Richardson attributes the importance of *Watson and the Shark* to its imaginative impact and distinction of style, its expression of a



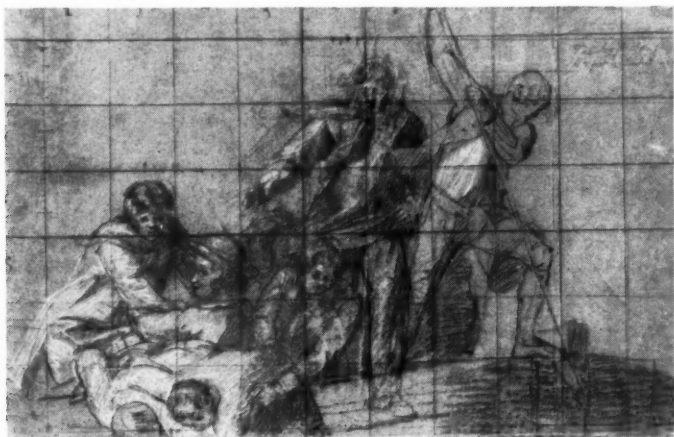
(Fig. 1) **WATSON AND THE SHARK**
By JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY
AMERICAN, 1738-1815
Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1948



(Fig. 2) **STUDY FOR WATSON AND THE SHARK**
By JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY
AMERICAN, 1738-1815
City Appropriation, 1948

fundamental theme in the annals of American art, that of outdoor adventure and man in conflict with nature, combined factors which elevate the painting to the sphere of the most notable aesthetic achievements in the field of American historical painting.²

There have recently come to light several preparatory drawings for *Watson and the Shark*, of which the Detroit Museum this year has added to the permanent collection of graphic arts a group of four compelling examples, depicting



(Fig. 3) **STUDY FOR WATSON AND THE SHARK**
By JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, AMERICAN, 1738-1815
City Appropriation, 1948

as figure studies several of the characters in the boatload who came to the rescue of Brook Watson, an adventurous and seafaring young Britisher—a future Lord Mayor of London—who, while swimming in Havana Harbor where his ship lay at anchor, was attacked by a shark.

One of the Detroit drawings³ represents the head of the frightened oarsman at the far left in the painting (Fig. 2), the second⁴ a detail of the group of three oarsmen at the left, the third⁵ a rough sketch of the middle oarsman of this group combined on the same sheet with the figure rising with harpoon in the bow of the boat at the moment of attacking the marauding man-eater. In this third sketch the two figures are depicted in reverse to the direction of those in the painting, which would indicate that this was one of the earliest discarded ideas for the finished work. The fourth drawing⁶ is a reduced study, laid out mathematically in squares for later enlargement in oils, of all nine members of the rescue party (Fig. 3).

The emergence of these drawings by Copley is of great interest since they afford an excellent opportunity to study the master's working habits, the flexibility of his style and his command of form, his preoccupation with telling gesture and fleeting movement, the vagaries of keenly observed instantaneous expression and suggested changes of light, atmosphere, and mood, so difficult to capture with freshness in oil-on-canvas. The use of the medium of drawing in Copley's hand reflects his indebtedness to such old masters as Titian and Correggio, with whose work he became more familiar while travelling in Italy in 1774 and 1775, and to Rubens in Northern Europe, from them learning the importance of careful preliminary figure drawing toward an ultimate pictorial goal.

Few drawings by Copley of his earlier American period are in existence and, with the exception of those of the English period belonging to Sir Robert Witt in London, from whose collection these studies come, the Karolik Collection in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and Mr. Harry Shaw Newman in New York, so far a relatively small number of preparatory studies for his great narrative paintings of later years have come to light. In these rapid, powerful conceptions, usually executed in crayon heightened with white, as in the case of those for *Watson and the Shark*, and proof indeed of disciplined training in the basic fundamentals of sound draughtmanship, Copley acquits himself with distinction and marked ability as an individual talent in the realm of the old master drawing. The examples in question, interesting from the technical and documentary standpoint for comparison with the final painting, in addition stand alone quite independently as entities for enjoyment and appreciation—as separate works of art—charged as they are with immediately recognizable taste and spontaneity and the unmistakable touch of the discriminating master.

JOHN S. NEWBERRY, JR.

³ Acc. no. 46.310. Oil on canvas: height 36 inches; width 30½ inches. Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1946.

⁴ Richardson, E. P., "Watson and the Shark by John Singleton Copley," *The Art Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 3, Summer 1947, pp. 213-218.

³ Acc. no. 48.201. Crayon heightened with white on gray paper: height 12 inches; width 10 inches. City Appropriation, 1948.

⁴ Acc. no. 48.202. Crayon heightened with white on gray paper: height 9¾ inches; width 11⅞ inches. City Appropriation, 1948.

⁵ Acc. no. 48.204. Crayon heightened with white on gray paper: height 13½ inches; width 15⅝ inches. City Appropriation, 1948.

⁶ Acc. no. 48.203. Crayon heightened with white on gray paper: height 14½ inches; width 21⅞ inches. City Appropriation, 1948.

A FAMILLE ROSE BOTTLE VASE



BOTTLE VASE, FAMILLE ROSE PORCELAIN
CHINESE, REIGN OF CH'IENT LUNG, 1736-1796
Gift of the Sarah Bacon Hill Fund, 1947

Clair-de-lune, gros-bleu, blanc de Chine, sang-de-boeuf, famille rose, these terms and other similarly Gallic expressions so often applied to famous types of eighteenth century Chinese porcelain must have been quite appropriate, since they are still in current use, even among collectors who never went beyond French 2 in college. And indeed in the late examples of Chinese porcelain, there is a *je ne sais quoi* rococo, supremely tasteful, technically perfect, at times over elaborate and slightly "decadent," which reminds one of what has come to pass (quite wrongly) as typical French art.

To the most delightful of the series listed above—the *famille rose*—belongs a large bottle shape vase recently acquired by the Institute. It is a welcome addition to our Chinese collections, which are much richer in early — Han, T'ang and Sung — examples than in such late specimens of the art of the Chinese potter as this eighteenth century bottle.

The Institute owned already a masterpiece of that period: the covered bowl with Louis XV ormolu mounts which, thanks to the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Kanzler, graces the "Kanzler Room." Although both these pieces belong to the same period — the reign of Ch'ien Lung — and probably were both made at the famous Ching-tê-chên factory, they do not duplicate one another. While the bowl has still the dignity and strength which we associate with the wares of the great preceding reign, that of the Emperor K'ang Hsi, the bottle

represents the last great moment of Chinese art, and is in our collection like the the last flower, fragile and precious, of a great civilization. A few decades after the delicate chrysanthemums and quails which decorate the latter were painted, the art of the Chinese potter, supreme for two thousand years, sank into a stagnation from which it has never recovered.

To us today, both the shape and the decoration of our new acquisition seem typically Chinese. Yet to the eighteenth century Chinese purist, only the outline, so restrained, with its globe-like body and its tall slender neck exquisitely modelled to hold one or two flowering tree branches, was really Chinese. Only in the contour did the Chinese collector recognize the quiet perfection of rhythm which he associated with great art: to him the colors were "foreign colors" (*yang ts' ai*), as exotic as the comic opera Buddhas from Derby or Meissen were to David Garrick or Marie-Christine of Saxe-Teschen. For, strangely enough, the pale crimson enamel color which gave its name to the *famille rose* porcelain was not indigenous to China. A mixture of gold, chloride and tin, it had been used for some time in Europe in the making of enamels and ruby glass; probably at the end of the K'ang Hsi period, Portugese traders or Jesuit missionaries had introduced it in Canton, which was the Chinese center of enamel manufacture. At first the opaque color was muddy or garrish; but in the hands of these perfect technicians, the Chinese porcelain painters, it soon was transmuted into one of the most subtle colors of the Chinese palette, so pleasing in its novelty, so varied in its possibilities that it often became the predominant tint of their color scheme — hence the name *famille rose* given to the entire group.

Neither is the technique the traditional technique of the Chinese porcelain painter. Until then underglaze colors, few in number anyway, had been those used most often. They mingled readily with the glaze and, as Hannover says, derived their brilliance from it. Of course such a technique, which I imagine somewhat similar to that of fresco painting, did not allow changes; it required from the painter an absolute sureness and a perfect knowledge of his medium. On the contrary enamel painting on the glaze, such as is typical of *famille rose* decoration, is closer to oil painting, since it permits correction and disposes of a greater variety of tones; melting at a lower temperature than the glaze, overglaze colors can be fired without difficulty on a surface already glazed. Such enamel colors are soft, at least as compared to the glittering white glaze which they use as a background, and thus deserve their other Chinese names: *fên ts'ai* or *juan ts'ai* ("pale" or "soft" colors).

As important a change occurred in the handling of these colors. The broad, abstract brushstrokes and the linear rhythm which had been characteristic of Chinese painting were slowly replaced with a naturalistic technique of painting, a great attention being paid to minute, sometimes insignificant details and, almost for the first time, to shading in the European tradition. These might have been dangerous innovations; but in the late K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung period, such were the technical proficiency and natural refinement of the Chinese craftsman

that he remained a great artist. The foreign flavor which the Chinese *cognoscenti* were able to detect in *yang ts'ai* remained after all slight compared to the purely Chinese characteristics preserved; and *famille rose* porcelain, such as our bottle, is still as Chinese as the Derby "Pagoda" figures are English or Boucher's "Chinoiserie" French.

A long description of the Institute's bottle would be irrelevant: Mr. Lucas' photograph does justice to its subtle details. I may say, however, that it is decorated, in overglaze enamels of course, with a delicately executed scene of two quails on a rookery among blooming chrysanthemums. Subtly elaborate, the decoration occupies only one half of the surface: the rest is covered with the shiny white glaze which enhances the softness of the colors, yellow, orange, green, blue, lavender, brown, black, and rose — a complex and glorious palette. If to capture loveliness is, as I believe, one of the main aims of art, then this unknown craftsman was a great artist.

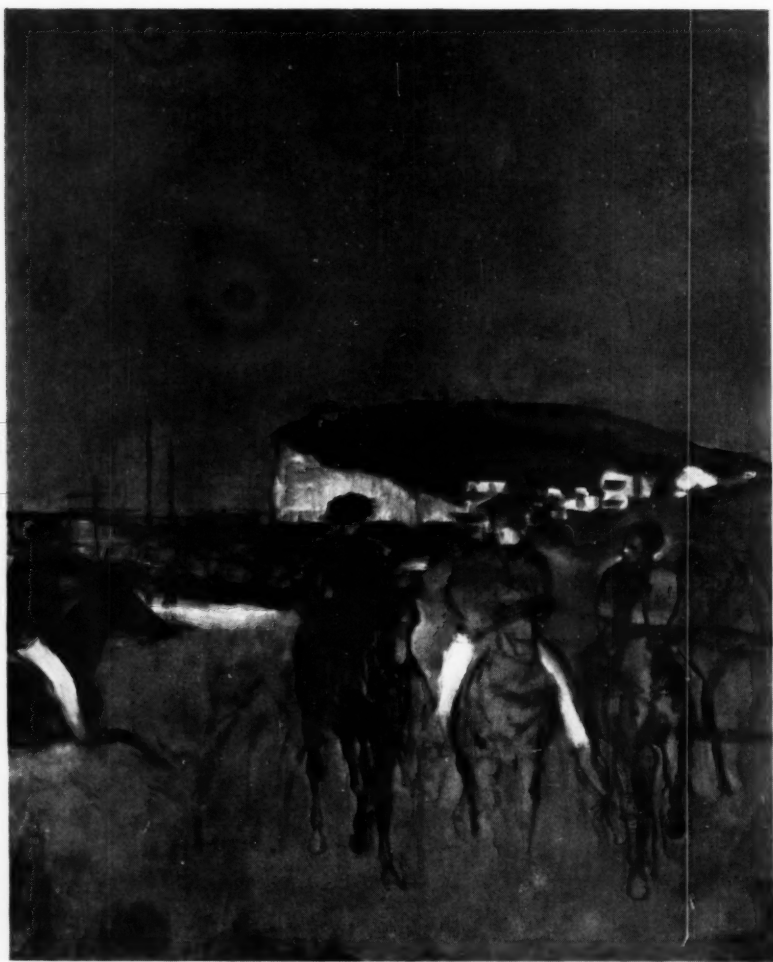
PAUL L. GRIGAUT

Acc. no. 47.371. Gift of the Sarah Bacon Hill Fund, 1947. Height 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Ch'ien Lung seal mark underfoot. Exhibited, Masterpieces of Chinese Ceramics, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1947. Purchased from C. T. Loo and Company, New York.

A SKETCH by DEGAS

One day some fifty years ago Renoir was standing in front of a still life by Cézanne with his friend Maurice Denis, the religious painter. Renoir did not like particularly the Aix master; yet, turning to Denis: "*Cet animal-là*," he exclaimed admiringly, "*cet animal-là*, he could not put two daubs of paint on a canvas without making a great painting out of it." This is a slender anecdote (yet, among anecdotes of painting and painters, it has the rare advantage of being true); and the Institute unfortunately owns no Cézanne painting to which I might apply Renoir's *mot*. But I could not help remember it when Degas' *Morning Ride* was acquired a few weeks ago for the Institute's French galleries: on this rather large canvas there is not much more than Renoir's two daubs of paint, and yet this sketch is a great painting, a worthy addition to the other works of art acquired through the Ralph H. Booth Fund.

When Degas died, blind and almost friendless, he was, as he had wanted to be, "famous and unknown." He had stopped exhibiting many years before and was living the life of a recluse in his Montmartre studio, watched over and protected from visitors by the traditional and exasperating servant whom one meets so often in old artists' lives. Yet he was famous. There was a "légende Degas," that of a bitter, secretive old man of genius whose paintings, when sold at auction, reached the high prices which we associate with genius — recognized genius — and whose studio was filled with thousands of canvases.



THE MORNING RIDE
By EDGAR DEGAS, FRENCH, 1834-1917
Gift of the Ralph Harman Booth Fund, 1948

Soon after Degas' death his heirs decided to sell this accumulation of works, which formed the largest part of the painter's *œuvre*. There were classical scenes and portraits, today world famous, in which Degas showed himself a worthy pupil of Ingres. There were copies after the old masters and splendid drawings which for years this other "old man mad with drawing" (as Hokusai, one of the painter's gods, called himself) had kept hidden even from his closest friends. There were also several hundred studies on canvas, such as the *Morning Ride*, purposely left unfinished, or discarded by one of the most fastidious artists who ever lived.

Degas himself, who said "La Peinture, c'est de la vie privée" ("Painting? It is part of the painter's private life"), Degas would probably not have approved of the dispersal of such incomplete sketches. But it may well be in works of this type that his artistic personality makes itself felt most completely, with its hesitations and its efforts towards expression. In the painter's mind the *Morning Ride* was evidently nothing more than an unsequential *scraffito* soon to be abandoned. Yet such is Degas' ability to transmit emotion while noting on a piece of canvas, almost unconsciously and for himself, a rapid suggestion of movement, that we receive an impression of completeness—for every emotion is complete in itself—of monumentality even. There is often something deeply satisfying in a sketch. Let us remember that Homer did not describe Helen; he just said that she was beautiful, and left to the listener's imagination all details of her beauty. So it is often, I feel, with Degas. "Drawing," he once said, "is not what one sees, but what one must make others see." And to accomplish this aim, a few undulating lines, a few dashes of white, black and green pigment on a sized background are enough. The most fragile notations become the most precious, all that is essential is here.

The Institute already owns several works by Degas: two "Dancers" (a pastel and a famous small oil), a typical nude and a portrait, the latter the gift of Ralph H. Booth twenty years ago. These represent all the phases of the master's talent but one: for many Degas is the painter of horses as much as the painter of ballerinas, and the *Morning Ride* fills this gap. The subject is banal. At the seaside, somewhere near Etretat or Le Tréport, three people on horseback, a woman in a quaint Eugénie hat, an old bearded man and a boy, are leisurely coming towards us; from the left a fourth rider appears, his horse cut in two as in a Japanese print by the edge of the canvas. But the *raison d'être* of the *Morning Ride* is that it is a study of contrasts and a composition in space, as abstract in its own way as Picasso's famous *Horse and Rider* (of which, incidentally, the boy's pony reminds us strongly.) The painting is divided in two sections, the unfinished ground green mottled with black, the unfinished sky showing the brown preparation. The unexpected harmony of bitter green and muddy brown, the strange unbalanced, off-center composition, the wavy, complex lines which suggest in a Daumier-like pattern the amble of horses, all possess the eerie, fantastic quality of objects seen in a dream. Every detail gives an impression of something never seen before, and yet vaguely familiar and disturbing, and betrays the personality of a deeply original painter who, painting for himself, might have adopted D. H. Lawrence's motto: "Art for my sake." Like a pure scientist, Degas was less interested in the final solution of his problem than in the problem itself: how to suggest with lines what the Impressionists wanted to express with color — congealed motion. There is in *Faust* a beautiful and famous line: "... Augenblick . . . verweile doch . . . ! du bist so schön" ("Minute, oh stop, thou art so beautiful!"). In his own language, this is, I believe, what Degas attempted to express.

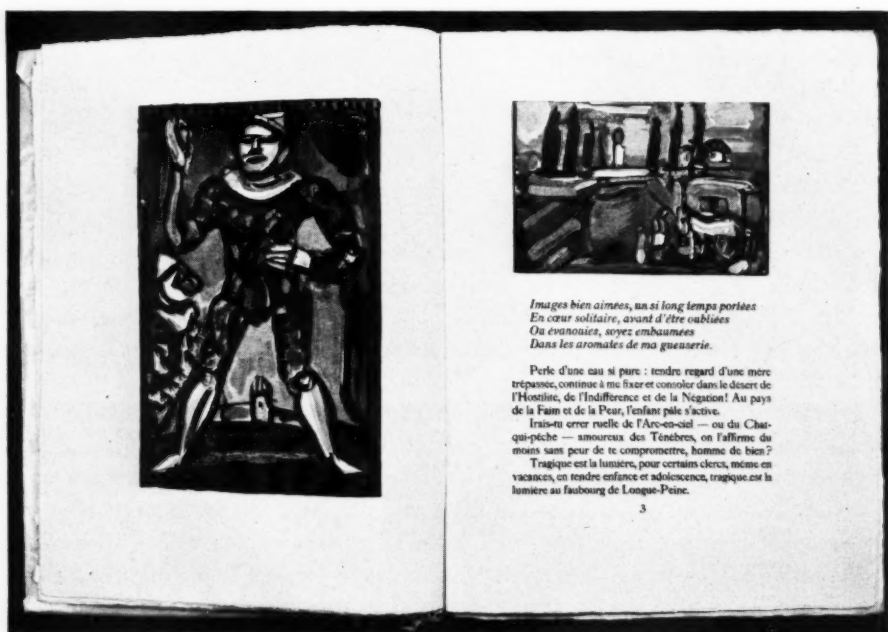
PAUL L. GRIGAUT

Acc. no. 48.279. Canvas. Height 33¼ inches; width 25½ inches. Gift of the Ralph H. Booth Fund, 1948. Stamped lower left: *degas*. Probably painted about 1864-1868. Collections: Degas (Third Degas sale, No. 21); Hector Brame; Bignou; L. L. Coburn (1927). Sold Parke-Bernet, May 4, 1944, No. 34. Listed in J. B. Manson, *The Life and Work of Edgar Degas*, p. 48; mentioned and reproduced in Lemoisne, *Degas*, 1948, No. 118 of the Catalogue.

A MASTERPIECE OF BOOKMAKING

To most laymen, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein, a book is a book. Yet books in the great Renaissance tradition are still being printed, proving that a book may after all be more than words on sheets of paper and that the artist-bookman need not bow to the impersonal will of the typesetting machine or the automatic high-speed press. Georges Rouault's *Cirque de l'Etoile Filante* (The Circus of the Shooting Star) is such a book. A welcome gift from Mr. Robert H. Tannahill to the Institute, this masterpiece of modern craftsmanship has found in the library's growing rare book collection its rightful place among other important and precious imprints, for instance the De Bry-Le Moisne *Brevis Narratio* and the William Blake-Young *Night Thoughts*.

The Cirque de l'Etoile Filante, a large folio (17½ x 13¼ inches), bears the publishing date 1938; but it took ten years to complete. This is not extraordinary.



PAGES FROM LE CIRQUE DE L'ETOILE FILANTE
By GEORGES ROUAULT, FRENCH, CONTEMPORARY
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1948

Producing a completely handmade book has always been a tremendous undertaking which called for the combined efforts of many craftsmen and artists. The paper is of course handmade, *vergé de Montval*, "good enough to eat," as fine printers often describe the texture and body of a particularly delectable sheet. The book itself was printed on the hand presses of a famous small printing shop, the "Deux Ours," from a new fount of hand-set Plantin types. These qualifications would be enough to make the *Cirque de l'Etoile Filante* a noteworthy specimen of French bookmaking. But the main interest of the book lies elsewhere, in the seventeen full-page etchings in as many as seven colors by Rouault and the eighty-odd wood engravings which he designed specially for his novel. They are among the best work of the great painter, glowing and brilliant like medieval glass windows, subtle and intimate like a poem by Baudelaire.

The individual most directly responsible for the inception of the *Cirque de l'Etoile Filante* was Ambroise Vollard, the publisher *marchand-amateur*, who was something of a genius on his own right. His sense of artistic rightness led him to the discovery and championing of both Cézanne and Rouault. He published in handsome and expensive formats the works of his two "discoveries" as well as those of Toulouse-Lautrec, Renoir, Redon, Chagall, Picasso, Braque, Bonnard and other such "advanced" artists, at a time when their names evoked widespread ridicule instead of artistic reverence. Vollard was a hard taskmaster and his ambitious publishing projects often occupied artists with graphic work while their production of paintings suffered: about 25 books in various states of completion were still unpublished when he met his tragic death in an automobile accident in 1939.

WILLIAM A. BOSTICK

AN EMBROIDERED CLOTH OF EQUATORIAL AFRICA

Mr. Robert H. Tannahill has presented to the collection of African Negro Art an embroidered fiber cloth made by the Bakuba.¹ It is woven of raffia fiber in plain cloth technique, the fibers of both warp and weft forming a thick fringe. A seam in the center may indicate that originally this specimen consisted of two mats embroidered with the same design. This is an all-over pattern of a diagonal trellis, each space framing a diamond outline with alternately a compact lozenge or an arrowhead pointing in two directions. The design is worked in pile and gives an effect as of velvet. Minyoa fibers, dyed red with Tukula wood, are inserted with a needle. This passes beneath one warp thread and over the corresponding weft, and leaves an absolutely unbroken surface on the reverse side. The Minyoa fiber is drawn through and cut with a knife, leaving about one-sixteenth of an inch standing up on either side of the warp thread. This operation is repeated until the design is complete. The Tukula wood was apparently rubbed onto the fiber in powder form, not used as an infusion;² this explains the fact that it has spread over the raffia cloth, leaving a slight reddish



EMBROIDERED CLOTH
AFRICAN (BAKUBA), PROBABLY 19TH CENTURY
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1948

film on the yellow ground. The weaving is done by men, the embroidery by women, who usually wear such cloths on feastdays.

The Bakuba, also called Bushongo, are a federation of tribes who live in the center of the Belgian Congo, between the Sankuru and Kasai rivers. The first white man who entered the closely guarded Bakuba kingdom was the German physician Ludwig Wolf, in 1885. He found a well watered fertile country tended by people who, in rigorous isolation, had built up a refined civilization based on proud ancestral traditions. Twenty-three years later, in 1908, the Hungarian E. Torday visited the Bakuba with the intention of building up a collection of their works of art for the British Museum. He found the country overrun by white traders, the old social and political organization in complete dissolution. Yet the love of art and fine craftsmanship was still alive and certain old men still knew the names and history of one hundred and twenty-one kings,

up to the fifth century of our era. They told Torday that their kingdom's most brilliant period had been reached in the early part of the seventeenth century, when Shamba Bolongongo was king. Together with many other improvements he introduced the craft of embellishing plain woven cloths with elaborate embroidery. Since then the style of the designs has probably changed little if at all, and the craft remains authentic. It is a purely indigenous art, the art of a keenly sensitive people, skillful in the use of the "endless" pattern. As Torday said: "The Bushongo are undoubtedly the greatest artists of black Africa; as weavers, embroiderers, carvers in wood, and as workers of metal, they have not their equal in the whole continent."³

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL

¹ Acc. no. 48.267. Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1948. Length 56½ inches; width 23½ inches, without the fringe. Probably 19th century.

² H. Himmelheber, *Negerkuenstler*, Stuttgart, 1935.

³ E. Torday, *On the Trail of the Bushongo*.

TRUMBULL'S SURRENDER OF LORD CORNWALLIS AT YORKTOWN

Although the four large paintings of American Revolutionary scenes by John Trumbull, completed and installed in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington in 1824, have always occupied a place as illustrations in the study of American history, they have never evoked much enthusiasm as works of art. Trumbull, then 68, was no longer at the height of his powers and unaccustomed to working on a monumental scale; these paintings had lost the vitality and artistic conviction of the original sketches and smaller paintings created more than thirty years before. For a just appreciation of Trumbull we must turn to the earlier paintings of the *Declaration of Independence* or the *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown* at Yale University and to sketches, such as two studies in oil on canvas for the latter event, recently acquired by the Detroit Institute of Arts.¹

In the beginning of the American Revolution Trumbull had served in the Revolutionary Army; at the end of the war he was a contractor of Army supplies. During both periods he was in close contact with General Washington and other prominent figures so that he knew intimately the important events of the day. However, it was during the Revolution that he had decided to become a painter. He had spent a short time studying with Benjamin West in London in 1780, and at the close of the war returned to London to resume his studies.

The great artistic interest in London of the seventeen eighties was in narrative or historical subjects of a dramatic and moral character. West was painting "Queen Philippa Interceding for the Lives of the Burghers of Calais"; John Singleton Copley, "Watson and the Shark," both in the Institute's collection. At this time Trumbull conceived the idea of depicting the stirring and significant

events in recent American history beginning with the Battle of Bunker Hill. West encouraged Trumbull to paint a whole series in such a size suitable to be engraved for wide distribution.

In 1786 while working on the *Declaration of Independence*, Trumbull wrote in his *Journal*: "I also made various studies for the *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis*, and in this found great difficulty; the scene was altogether one of utter formality — the ground was level — military etiquette was to be scrupulously observed, and yet the portraits of the principal officers of three proud nations must be preserved, without interrupting the general regularity of the scene. I drew it over and over again, and at last, having resolved upon the present arrangement, I prepared the small picture to receive the portraits."²

In the autumn of 1787 Trumbull visited Jefferson in Paris where he painted the portraits of the French officers in the *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis*. Two years later he was in New York securing further portraits for several of the historical paintings including the *Surrender*. A year or so later he went to Yorktown to sketch the actual scene of the surrender, and shortly thereafter must have completed the painting, twenty by thirty inches, now in the collection of Yale University. Trumbull himself describes the scene in his *Account of Paintings*, Yale University Library (1841): "The American troops were drawn up on the right of the road leading into York; General Washington and the American general officers on the right. The French troops on the opposite side



SKETCH FOR THE SURRENDER OF LORD CORNWALLIS AT YORKTOWN
By JOHN TRUMBULL, AMERICAN, 1756-1843
Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1948

of the Road facing them; General Rochambeau and the principal officers of the French army and navy on the left . . .

"The painting represents the moment when the principal officers of the British army, conducted by General Lincoln, are passing the two groups of American and French generals, and entering between the two lines of the victors; by this means the principal officers of the three nations are brought near together, so as to admit of distinct portraits.

"In the centre of the painting, in the distance, is seen the entrance of the town, with the captured troops marching out, following their officers; and also a distant glimpse of York River, and the entrance of the Chesapeake Bay, as seen from the spot."³

The two sketches recently acquired by the Institute from an English collection are undoubtedly two of the 1786 studies. Neither show particular attention to portraiture, but rather indicate the working out of compositional problems. One, the least finished, is closest to the final composition, indicating the row of French officers to the left, General Lincoln leading the English officers in the center, and suggesting by a vague shaded area the American troops on the right.

The second sketch shows more clearly the position of Washington and the American officers, but otherwise is a different composition. General Lincoln is more in the foreground, the British in the center advancing toward him. This sketch illustrates a different moment of the surrender, and is interesting to com-



SKETCH FOR THE SURRENDER OF LORD CORNWALLIS AT YORKTOWN
By JOHN TRUMBULL, AMERICAN, 1756-1843
Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1948

pare with the eyewitness account related by Washington Irving: "The British were led by General O'Hara on horseback, who, riding up to General Washington, took off his hat and apologized for the non-appearance of Lord Cornwallis, on account of indisposition. Washington received him with dignified courtesy, but pointed to Major-General Lincoln as the officer who was to receive the submission of the garrison. By him they were conducted into a field where they were to ground their arms."⁴

Although these sketches lack the detailed portraits of the completed paintings, they lose none of the dramatic narrative significance of this event in our history. As paintings they add to the collection two fine examples of an important phase in American Art. As sketches they show Trumbull's brushstroke at its best. They not only interest us historically, but also as works of art, for their impressionistic quality delights the modern eye.

JOYCE BLACK GNAU

¹ Acc. nos. 48.216 and 48.217. Canvas. Height of both sketches, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches; width 21 inches. Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1948.

² Autobiography, *Reminiscences and Letters of John Trumbull*, 1841, p. 148.

³ Trumbull's Catalogue of 1841.

⁴ Washington Irving, *Life of Washington*, Vol. IV, p. 384.



THE SURRENDER OF LORD CORNWALLIS AT YORKTOWN
By JOHN TRUMBULL
Yale University Art Gallery



PAIR OF PORPHYRY AND ORMOLU BOWLS
FRENCH, ABOUT 1775
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Kanzler, 1948

A PAIR OF PORPHYRY BOWLS

Along with the greater spaciousness and more even lighting accomplished by the renovation of the French 18th century *salon*, an impression of greater warmth and cheerfulness was created. In selecting the furnishings of the room, particular attention was devoted to their color and texture, to the soft yet brilliant colors of porcelains and rug, the marquetry and gilding of wood, the polished sheen of varicolored marbles.

Supplementing their generous gift, which made the restoration of the Gallery possible a year or two ago, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Kanzler presented a number of works of art which enhance our appreciation of the rich and elegant styles of Louis XV and Louis XVI, and have continued to make outright gifts of objects formerly on loan. One of their most recent gifts is a handsome pair of porphyry cups or bowls ornamented with gilt bronze. Rich in textural and color contrast, each cup consists of a shallow porphyry bowl, resting freely on the bowed heads of three adossed nereids delicately wrought in gilt bronze. The clasped hands and entwined arms of the naiads merge into a supporting group of great fluidity; their forms, terminating in gracefully swirling dolphin tails, rest on a circular base ornamented with a gilt bronze band of leaves in crisp low relief. Oxblood in color, the pedestal of felsite (fine-grained) porphyry is

flecked with tiny crystals of white feldspar, serving as a foil for the shallow upper bowl, with its large crystals of pink feldspar against the gray-green of the granite (coarse-grained) porphyry.

Relatively little documentary material has come to light on the pair of bowls. They formed part of the Stroganoff Collection of Leningrad, housed for years in the sumptuous Stroganoff Palace built by the Italian architect Rastrelli between 1752 and 1774. When the Stroganoff collection was auctioned off in Berlin in May, 1931, the catalogue listed the bronze-mounted porphyry groups as of French workmanship, made around 1770. Stylistic grounds, however, would seem to point to a somewhat later date; the mountings and the classical restraint of the whole suggest the period of Louis XVI.

Artistic relations between France and Russia were very close in the eighteenth century, and the Institute pieces may have been made in France for the Russian market. Members of the Stroganoff family were wealthy, cultured cosmopolites who maintained residences in Paris, Rome and Florence as well as in Russian. Count Alexander Stroganoff (1733-1811), a famous collector, did much to spread French artistic ideas through Russia. The count, scion of a family whose wealth and power stemmed back to the reign of Ivan the Terrible, was reared in Paris. He returned there later (1769) to live for almost a decade with his wife, the art-loving Princess Ekaterina Troubetzkaja. Greuze painted their son Paul as a child, and Tassart carved a marble bust of the lad during his teens.

When Count Alexander Stroganoff and his wife finally returned home to St. Petersburg in 1779, he brought the major part of his art collection with him from Paris — Houdon busts of Diderot and Voltaire, figures by Falconet and Clodion, along with a profusion of vases, clocks, candelabra and *surtouts de table* to infuse warmth and color into a stately palace. It is most probable that the newly acquired porphyry bowls were sent from Paris at the same time.. Like the *salon's* gilt center table from the Palace at Tsarkoje-Selo and the Louis XV chandelier from Pavlovsk, they reveal the close ties between eighteenth century France and Russia.

ELIZABETH H. PAYNE

¹ Acc. nos. 48.165 and 48.166. Diameter of bowl 10½ inches; overall height 15 5/6 inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Kanzler, 1948.

A CONTEMPORARY SILVER CIBORIUM

A silver ciborium, the work of Arthur Nevill Kirk, outstanding American silversmith, has recently been acquired by the Museum through the General Membership Fund of the Founders Society. Such ciboria or pyxes are traditional vessels used since early Christian times to hold the reserved consecrated wafer of the Eucharist. Mr. Kirk's ciborium, while it has about it much of the character of Gothic ecclesiastical silver, is an original and creative design. The clean



CIBORIUM
By ARTHUR NEVILL KIRK, AMERICAN, CONTEMPORARY
Gift of the General Membership Fund, 1948

cut, simple shapes are pleasantly arranged to give an upward movement to the design, culminating in the small cross of the cover. The decoration is extremely simple, being composed of cross shapes, plain bands, and beading carefully subordinated to the main outline or the form. Much of our enjoyment, however, comes from the craftsmanship and the beautifully handled surface of the beaten silver.

Arthur Nevill Kirk has exerted a great influence in Michigan, both as a teacher and as a creative craftsman. Most of the fine silversmiths working in this area today owe their training directly to Mr. Kirk or have been trained under one of his former students. Born in England he studied in London and exhibited widely in Europe before coming to Michigan to join the newly organized staff of the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Among his major commissions since coming to America are altar pieces for the National Cathedral, Washington; St. Paul's Cathedral, Detroit; and Christ Church, Cranbrook. At present Mr. Kirk lives in Birmingham and conducts a small class in Detroit.

W. E. WOOLFENDEN

Acc. no. 48.151. Height with cover, $10\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Diameter of bowl, 4 inches. Gift of the General Membership Fund, 1948.

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